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HISTORIC AND NATIONAL SONGS OF FRANCE

By JULIEN TIERSOT

I

IT is one of the noble privileges of music, joined with poetry, to be the harmonious and profound interpreter of the collective sentiment. The power of lyric art has ever been recognized by all souls imbued with the animation of faith. There is no religion which has not called upon this art to aid in the celebration of its mysteries. The most remote antiquity could furnish us, if need be, with illustrations of this truth. What did the Christians of the primitive church do when they gathered together far from the noise of the world? They sang hymns in which they affirmed their belief. Every one knows what a preponderance music had in the early centuries in the ceremonies of the Catholic Church. In the struggles of the Reformation the hymn again became a factor in the strife. Luther created the choral, sung in unison by all the people. It became a considerable force in his cause. Calvin, bearing witness to the impression made on the human spirit by the poetry of the psalms, has forcibly remarked: "But when melody is added, it transpierces the heart very much more." It is the same everywhere and in all ages. It appears that when voices join, hearts understand each other better. There is established between those who sing together a sympathetic current which brings them closer to each other, blends their thoughts, and directs them to a common goal.

For it is not only the religious sentiment which can be expressed by music. This art is worthy of being the messenger of every generous sentiment which arises in the soul of a multitude and carries it along. Thus music has often been seen to become a part of the world's history. This art has had its place in the world's epopees. Almost every century has its war-songs.

However, it is not of the simple *chanson*, or historic folk-song that we propose to speak in this study. We would rather deal with more ample manifestations of lyric art. We are thus led to the consideration of more recent epochs than those primitive times when the *chanson* was almost the only form in use. We do

not mean that this phase of the subject is not worthy of consideration. But we must recognize, in the first place, that the chief interest in the historic folk-song lies in its words, and that the music often plays a subaltern rôle of accompaniment or support. In most cases this music was not even written for the words. The verses of the historic song have almost always been fitted to some air known long before the events which the song celebrates, and which has, therefore, no immediate connection with the events.

Our old epic poems, of which the Song of Roland is the oldest and the most admirable type, were sung, as we know. But to what music? We will never know; that is certain. In not one case has any trace of the old tune been found in the old manuscripts, and it is greatly to be feared that the future will not vouchsafe to us any important discoveries on this point. In any case, it seems evident, that this music, to which our old minstrels, accompanying themselves on the rebec, told their love for "sweet France," was reduced to insignificance, scarcely more than a melismatic recitative, like that of the liturgical psalms or the *Oremus*, or at most like certain little melodic formulas, better as to their rhythmic structure, but equally brief, such as we find in some of our oldest traditional folk-songs.

Then there is another reason, which induces us to avoid the examination of our so-called historic folk-songs here. And that is the questionable authenticity of most of those which have been set in circulation throughout the world, either by investigators who are easily satisfied, some of whom are guilty even of palpable error, or by singers, who, going beyond these latter in some program number that has been successful, and not having found in the authentic stock a repertoire to their taste, have desired to satisfy a curious public by serving it, under the color of archaism, with entirely modern fabrications, and who have thus contributed to the spread of false ideas, against which we, desiring these retrospective studies to be always works of truth, cannot too emphatically warn all serious lovers of the art.

The least contaminated among these folk-songs are those in which the falsification is limited to the *ex post facto* application, by analogy, of a name or a historic event, though this name or this event was wholly foreign to the original poem at the time of its conception.

Of the many instances of this procedure let us present only one. In the whole history of France there is no personality more popular than Joan of Arc. And yet this popularity is of comparatively recent date, for the memory of our national heroine was

kept alive through a number of centuries without attracting much attention from the general populace. However, the historical folk-song enthusiasts must needs end up by finding Joan of Arc in our popular *chansons*. And so, in the manner described, they have discovered a song beginning:

Petite bergerette
A la guerre tu t'en vas.

O little shepherd maiden
For the wars thou dost set out.

In the last stanzas are found these lines:

Ell' porte la croix d'or
La fleur de lys au bras
.
Sa pareille il n'y a pas.

She bears a cross of gold
The lily on her arm
.
Her like cannot be found.

But, it was said, this shepherdess who goes off to the wars, who wears on her arm the colors of the King of France, and whose like cannot be found, is none other than Joan of Arc. George Sand, who heard the song in her native province of Berri, does not hesitate to connect it with the tradition of *la Grande Pastoure* (the great shepherdess), which, she asserts, had been kept alive in that province. Novelists have such lively imaginations! . . . Unfortunately, the song in question is only a variant of another folk-song current in a number of French provinces, in which there is never a thought of a shepherdess, but usually of a *petit soldat de guerre*. Better still, this traditional song is one of the rare French airs of which we find traces noted down in olden times. One variant is found in a manuscript from which Gaston Paris and Gevaert have taken their precious collection of "Chansons of the fifteenth century," precisely the time of Joan of Arc. Now, to whom is the invitation of the opening verses addressed? Is it to the little shepherdess? Not at all. The song is directed to

Gentils galants de France
Qui en la guerre allez.

Ye knights of France, so gallant
Who for the wars set out.

and the individual about whom the song is written is not a feminine warrior, it is not even a woman; it is a friend (*ami*) whose dress is thus described:

Il porte la croix blanche
Les éperons dorés, etc.

A pure white cross he weareth
His spurs are shining gold, etc.

and the end of the song tells us that this friend is no longer among the living:

Il est mort en Bretagne
Les Bretons l'ont tué.

In Brittany he perished
The Bretons killed him there.

One must, then, put up as best one can with the attribution to Joan of Arc of a song inspired by the tragic end of a soldier, her companion in arms perhaps, but a song which could never in any way have had the "good maid of Lorraine" for its heroine.

We see, however, how seductive these analogies are at times. There is another folk-song, a brisk and lively round dance which our children still sing. It sets by the ears, in a coquettish dialog, a king of England and a shepherdess. They quarrel, they fight; and the shepherdess ends by killing the king with her staff. Naturally, the first thought that pops into one's mind is that the valiant shepherdess must be Joan of Arc in person; but to suppose, after closer examination, that the song was written with this intention, would be a very hazardous conclusion. All our popular pastorals (they are connected with traditions that go much farther back than the fifteenth century) have for their chief character a shepherdess who resists a noble lord. To pretend to recognize Joan of Arc in this rustic but wide-awake heroine would do violence to the essential spirit of the French *chanson*.

Ernest Renan has very properly said: "The celebrities of the people are rarely those of history, and when the echoes of remote ages come down to us through two channels, one popular and the other historic, the two forms of the tradition are rarely in full accord with each other." To which we might add that folk-songs are, in an almost absolute sense, works of pure imagination, and that their characters, far from being modeled upon historic realities, have a quality of abstraction which renders them positively unreal.

That is why a study of historic songs may neglect almost entirely the elements furnished by folk-lore.

II

Let us however, linger a moment over one old *chanson* which does not really belong in the category of popular *chansons*, properly so-called, but which, on the contrary, has all the characteristics of the historic *chanson*. Destiny has ordained that, in an age much later than the epoch of its birth, it should be raised to the dignity of a veritable national song.

It is the song *Vive Henri IV!* which, from 1815 to 1830, was the representative song of the restored monarchy.

We must not imagine that this song is unworthy of our attention, even from a purely musical point of view. One of our modern masters, who in matters of art has always held advanced views, but who, on the other hand, in politics, has never concealed his fidelity to the traditions of old France, M. Vincent d'Indy, has not disdained, recently, to compose an orchestral and choral arrangement of it, an act of consecration the significance of which we cannot fail to recognize. The history of this song of other days is curious enough to merit our attention.

To this air also we cannot object on the ground of unauthenticity or modernism. Very much on the contrary, the music is older than Henry IV himself. As to the verses, we are not so sure that they go back to the time of the hero of the song.

He is the only king, a poet has said, whose memory has been preserved by the people. The stanzas of the song are found united for the first time in an eighteenth century comedy, *La Partie de Chasse d'Henri IV* (Henry IV's Hunting Party). It may well be that some of these verses are in the style of the author of the comedy, Collé. It appears however, that the beginning: *Vive Henri IV, vive ce roi vaillant* (Long life to Henry IV, this valiant king), goes back to an old tradition. As to the melody, there is no doubt. It is found noted independently of the words in several collections of French *chansons* printed in the seventeenth century and even earlier, going back into the latter half of the sixteenth. It was a dance, the "*branle coupé* named *Cassandra*." Its heavy and regular cadence might go well with a song of the affirmative character which befits an act of homage to a king. But earlier still, under Henry III and Charles IX it seems to have regulated the ceremonious steps of the dance, both at court and in the town. The *Orchésographie*, Thoinot Arbeau's celebrated treatise on the dance, printed in 1589, contains the complete notation. It is interesting to reproduce this document, truly authentic in this case.



Lest we dwell too long on this topic, let us just remind the reader that the name, Cassandra, which serves as a title to the chanson and to the dance, was the name of the woman beloved of Ronsard, to whom were dedicated some of the most perfect verses ever written in French: the Book of the Loves of Cassandra. Can we believe that the air of the dance "Cassandra" had acquired this title because the poet had once sung some of his marvellous verses to this tune? We cannot affirm it, but it is not impossible. Later on, in the course of the seventeenth century, other and sometimes vulgar words were adapted to the same air. This is the latest form in which it is associated with the words which have brought it its definitive glory.

Leourdement

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major and 3/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is slower than the previous piece, with a repeat sign after the first four measures. The second staff continues the melody. Below the staves are the lyrics in French and English.

Vive Hen-ri qua-tre! Vi-ve ce roi vail-lant! Ce diable à qua-tre A
 (Long live King Hen-ry! A val-lant king is he! Dev'lish good fel-low, Thrice
 le tri-ple ta-lent De boire et de bat-tre Et d'être un vert ga-lant.
 tal-ent-ed, say we. He can drink and fight and a gal-lant blade can be.)

III

Vive Henri IV is almost the only *chanson* of this period which deserves attention. Neither the age of Louis XIV nor that of Louis XV and Louis XVI has left us any historic song worthy of presentation. Shall we stop to speak of *Malbrough s'en va t'en guerre*? It is true that this is one of the most widely known songs in France up to the present day. Its popularity among the educated classes of society is a singular phenomenon. This *chanson*, truly popular, is said to have been brought to the court of Versailles by the nurse of the Dauphin, the son of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, a good woman who bore, it is said, a name predestined for a nurse, Madame Poitrine. Sung by her to lull the royal babe to sleep, the song charmed the august personages who heard it. Following their example, all the world repeated

it; the town as well as the court was enraptured with it. Beaumarchais had the air sung in his "Marriage of Figaro" which was performed soon after. In short, the song was launched successfully. While it remained popular in the provinces, where numerous variants have often been noted, it also continued to be sung in the cities by all French men and women from their earliest years. No other song has ever been so successful.

The song is supposed to be France's revenge upon the celebrated English general, the Duke of Marlborough, for the defeats which he had inflicted upon her; but it is not easy to recognize the Duke in the personage described in the song. As a matter of fact, the song was not originally written with reference to Marlborough at all. The same words had already been sung on the death of the Duke of Guise! So that this tableau, half serious, half comic, of a funeral cortege—"to celebrate the memory of a hero," if we may borrow the superscription of Beethoven's masterpiece for our trifling *chanson*, has never been "historic" except in a general sense.

To sum up, from the time of Mazarin, who said of the Parisians, "They sing. They will pay for it," up to the days of 1789, when the ladies of the court sang the romances of Grétry with much tender feeling, applying them to the misfortunes of Louis XVI, there have been written and sung a multitude of *chansons* on subjects of contemporary history. But they are, for the most part, rhymed chronicles belonging to the anecdotal life of the nation, rather than works of art, lyrical utterances in which the music is made the echo of the national consciousness. These latter differ very much from the anecdotic and satirical *chansons*, the consideration of which has led us rather far from the lofty principles which we set forth in the beginning of this study.

IV

We remarked there that only when it expresses the collective sentiment of a nation does music reach its highest power. But this sentiment has been restrained, buried too long in the depth of the soul of the people, to be able to burst forth sooner in a flood of harmony. We must wait until that soul becomes conscious of itself, of its personality, of its aspirations. The time is at hand. It is in the epoch which we have now reached, the time of the French Revolution, that we penetrate to the very heart of our subject. The collective sentiment of earlier ages had been essentially religious. Under the influence of the evolution of ideas and

of events it is going to be modified. It will become national. And, to begin with, it seems that the expressions of these two forms of feeling are going to be intermingled, to be identified, one with the other. Michelet, the great expounder of the life of the people and of France, has said: "That which characterizes the early days of the Revolution is that the various parties become religions." This is true. And the newly acknowledged truths, being set up as articles of belief, were thenceforth affirmed, debated and sung as such. And what purer or nobler idea was so worthy of inspiring beautiful music as that for which the blood of brothers had flowed so freely? Liberty, native land, these are the gods which the Revolution worshipped. To them it raised temples and statues, and to them it sang hymns. The Country has its altar, before which the whole of France assembles to offer its vow of consecration. Never have the words "holy, divine and sacred" had a like place in the secular speech. "Our native land is the only divinity we may worship," proclaimed one who spoke in the name of the people in the menacing days of 1792; and in the same days they sang at the Opéra, before the statue of Liberty, *Seule divinité que le Français révère* (Thou sole divinity whom Frenchmen all revere). One orator of the Convention called the progressive party *La Montagne Sainte* (the Holy Hill). Another addresses himself to *la Sainte Humanité*. Rouget de Lisle speaks of *notre Sainte Constitution*. For every one his *Marseillaise* is the *chant sacré*, the *refrain sacré*; and when they come to the stanza: *Amour sacré de la Patrie*, quite spontaneously and without affectation all bow their heads and bend the knee.

This fervor, whatever its source may be, is eminently fitted to inspire lyric utterance, and no one will be astonished to learn that the Revolution found for its national festivals poets and musicians who were worthy of translating its lofty aspirations into verse and music. There was no need of awaiting the accomplishment of any organization before the collective inspiration gave spontaneous birth to songs worthy of the circumstances. From the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, July 14, 1790, to that festival of the Federation which united on the *Champ de Mars* before the outdoor altar of *La Patrie* the representatives of all the provinces of France, assembled for the first time in one place, the need, immediate and irresistible, made itself felt.

The preparations for the solemnity were simple in comparison with the majesty of the spectacle of such an assemblage. Those who made the arrangements had provided for no music but the *Te Deum*. Now, this would not suffice. On this day people

LE CHANT DU 14 JUILLET.

H Y M N E

Par M. J. CHENIER.

Musique de GOSSEC.

Larghetto

CHŒUR

1^{re} Strophe.

Clarinettes
Bassons.



H. CONTRE.

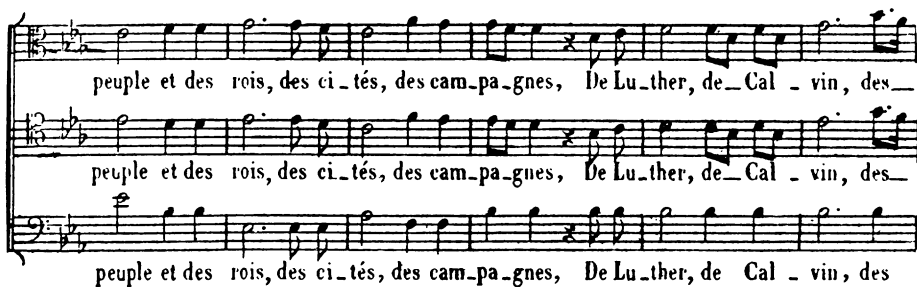
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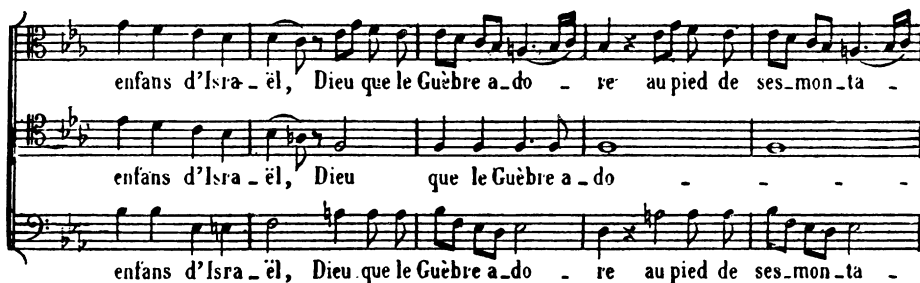
Dieu du
Dieu du
Dieu du



peuple et des rois, des ci-tés, des cam-pa-gnes, De Lu-ther, de Cal - vin, des -
peuple et des rois, des ci-tés, des cam-pa-gnes, De Lu-ther, de Cal - vin, des -
peuple et des rois, des ci-tés, des cam-pa-gnes, De Lu-ther, de Cal - vin, des



enfans d'Isra-ël, Dieu que le Guèbre a-do - re au pied de ses-mon-ta -
enfans d'Isra-ël, Dieu que le Guèbre a-do -
enfans d'Isra-ël, Dieu que le Guèbre a-do - re au pied de ses-mon-ta -



p

- gnes, en invo-quant l'astre du ciel, en in-vo-quant l'astre du ciel

- re en invo-quant l'astre du ciel, en in-vo-quant l'astre du ciel

- gnes, en invo-quant l'astre du ciel, en in-vo-quant l'astre du ciel.

cresc.

p I-ci sont ras-sem-blés, sous ton re-gard im-

p I-ci sont ras-sem-blés, sous ton re-gard im-

p I-ci sont ras-sem-blés, sous ton re-gard im-

ff

- men-se, De l'em-pi-re fran-çais les-fils et les-sou-tiens, Céle-

ff - men-se, De l'em-pi-re fran-çais les-fils et les-sou-tiens, Céle-

ff - men-se, De l'em-pi-re fran-çais les-fils et les-sou-tiens, Céle-

- brant de-vant-toi leur bon-heur qui com-men-ce, égaux à

- brant de-vant-toi leur bon-heur qui com-men-ce, égaux à

- brant de-vant-toi leur bon-heur qui com-men-ce, égaux à

leurs yeux comme aux tiens.

leurs yeux comme aux tiens.

leurs yeux comme aux tiens.

must sing in another tongue than Latin, and with accents better fitted to express the sentiment that thrilled thousands of hearts beating in unison. Even before the approach of the great day a young author, who had recently made a brilliant début in the theater, and who was soon to become a veritable national poet, Marie Joseph Chénier, had written some verses which throbbed with this collective sentiment. The verses themselves are a religious invocation:

Dieu du peuple et des rois, des cités, des campagnes,
De Luther, de Calvin, des enfants d'Israël,
Dieu que le Guèbre adore au pied de ses montagnes
En invoquant l'astre du ciel;

Ici sont assemblés, sous ton regard immense,
De l'empire français les fils et les soutiens,
Célébrant devant toi leur bonheur qui commence,
Egax à leurs yeux comme aux tiens.

Soleil qui, parcourant la route accoutumée,
Donnes, ravis le jour et règles les saisons,
Qui, versant des torrents de lumière enflammée,
Mûris nos fertiles moissons;

Feu pur, oeil éternel, âme et ressort du monde,
Puisses-tu des Français admirer la splendeur;
Puisses-tu ne rien voir dans ta course féconde
Qui soit égal à leur grandeur.

God of peoples and of kings, of cities and of plains
Of Luther, of Calvin, of the children of Israel,
God, whom the Gheber adores at the foot of his mountains,
When he invokes the orb of heaven,

Here are assembled in thy mighty presence
The sons and mainstays of imperial France,
Celebrating before thee the beginning of their happiness,
Equals in their own sight as in thine.

O sun, who, running thy accustomed course,
Givest returning day and rulest the seasons,
Who, showering down torrents of flaming light,
Ripenest our fruitful harvests,

Pure flame, eternal eye, soul and life-spring of the world,
Mayest thou admire the splendor of the French,
Mayest thou, in all thy fertile course, see nothing,
Which equals their grandeur.

A musician was soon found, who set these beautiful words to music, a hymn-like melody supported by majestic chords. His name was Jean François Gossec. With this beginning destiny

assigned to him the mission of composing the repertoire needed for the national festivals. Having provided the first models, Gossec soon found himself surrounded by a whole *Pléiade* of young composers who co-operated with him in this noble work. This historic moment, of capital importance to France and to humanity, was also of great significance in the history of French music. Until then, although French musicians had been quite active, a national school, properly so-called, had never come into being. Isolated masters, coming at times from foreign countries to Paris, had made their appearance, and had found successors from epoch to epoch, producing works representative of their times. Thus, by turns, we had (not to go back earlier than the seventeenth century), Lully, then Couperin and Rameau, and then Gluck, a stranger of Czech origin, not German, who had been brought up in the schools of Italy, and who was the culmination of the trend and the genius of true French dramatic music. Continuing his line, sometimes in the character of rivals, came Piccinni, Salieri and Sacchini. And finally, just before the period we are discussing, there had arisen the charming and ingenious school of old masters of French comic opera, Monsigny, Philidor, Grétry and others.

But for musical France none of these constituted a school in the true sense of the word.

This was the situation at the moment when the historic deeds we have mentioned were performed.

Gossec, whom we see at the head of the new movement, was, to tell the truth, a man of another generation. Almost sixty years of age when the Revolution broke out, he had, until then, figured as an artist of the old regime, the author of symphonies, of sacred compositions of vast dimensions, as well as of several lyric tragedies, in which he had manifested a genius particularly well adapted to the stage. For the rest, with a ready welcome for bold experiments and for new men, he had declared himself a partisan of Mozart and of Gluck when they came to Paris. In view of all these facts he was prepared to understand the artistic renovation which the general course of events demanded and to furnish the first models of the works which this renaissance was to produce. His hymns, of which the *Chant du 14 Juillet* which we have just considered, remains the best example, have a quality of religious contemplation, and in addition a certain swing and movement significant of common action. Their style is evidently derived from that of the religious choruses in Gluck's *Alceste* and the *Iphigenias*. Could any one at the end of the eighteenth

century have found better models? But it is Gluck grown greater, less immobile, expressing a more direct sentiment. We shall have occasion in the course of this essay to point out a number of beautiful examples written by Gossec in this spirit.

But at his age he could not, through any protracted period, remain equal to the task; and, as good fortune would have it, he found himself almost immediately surrounded by newcomers, young musicians, Frenchmen for the most part, who seconded him, continued his work, and in their turn wrote works, some of which are among the most beautiful that this period can show. Let us just mention here the names of some of the musicians who shared in this common effort. They were, besides Catel (a pupil of Gossec, quite young when the latter made his first essays in the new field), Méhul, one of the most admirable musicians that France has produced, the future composer of *Joseph*, whose début with *Euphrosine et Coradin*, a powerful work, dates no farther back than the year 1790; Cherubini, arrived from Italy shortly before the Revolution, promptly developing into a great French master and at the same time a model of the purest classic art; Lesueur, a precursor of musical romanticism; Dalayrac, Berton, Devienne, and others. They were bound together in harmonious union, at first to increase the repertoire of national music, then to write, each on his own account, various works of art. So true is it that this union constituted a veritable French school for the first time, that the designation, "school," is to be understood in every sense of the word, not merely as a group of composers working together with a common tendency, but also as a real teaching organization. In this epoch, with these masters, and in the events in which they were involved, the *Conservatoire* of Paris had its origin; an institution which did not exist before this time, and which, since then, has for a century and a quarter played an important rôle in the matter of artistic orientation and musical activity.

Without dwelling on each individual composer, let us make a cursory survey of the most important national festivals which were celebrated during the early years of the Revolution, naming, as we go, the musical works executed.

First we have on the anniversary, almost to a day, of the fall of the Bastille, in July 1791, another great celebration, which drew together all the citizens of Paris. The remains of Voltaire had been removed from the tomb where they had hitherto rested, to be carried to the Pantheon, the temple over whose portals one might read the dedication, but lately inscribed: "A grateful

country—to its great men.” This was one of the most characteristic of the celebrations instituted during the Revolution. The body was borne over the ruins of the Bastille. Thence an immense procession accompanied Voltaire through the Boulevards of Paris to the Pantheon, a long line of march which made the tour of almost the whole of what was then the city, with several stations. One of these stops was made before the house in which the philosopher had died, on the quay which to-day bears his name. At each halt musical numbers were performed by a large chorus. Words had been found in one of Voltaire’s works which suited the solemnity of the occasion perfectly, verses written at a time when no one, surely, suspected the coming events, the celebration of which they would one day be made to grace. It was a simple poem, written for a scene in an opera by Rameau on the subject of Samson. In this work, in a chorus sung during a popular uprising, are found these words:

Peuple, éveille toi, romps tes fers.
 Remonte à ta grandeur première. . .
 La liberté t’appelle!
 Peuple fier, tu naquis pour elle.
 Peuple, éveille toi, romps tes fers!

Ye people, rouse yourselves and break your bonds.
 Arise in grandeur as of old. . .
 ’Tis liberty that calls!
 Proud people, you were born for her.
 Ye people, rouse yourselves and break your bonds.

These verses, breathing the spirit of revolt, the effect of which was strengthened by the forceful rhythms of Gossec’s music, were sung before the Opéra, then on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, and at several other stations. Grouped around the triumphal funeral car, choirs of young women all dressed in white with pale blue sashes marched with slow steps like an old Greek sacrificial embassy. (One of these ribbons, faded with age, is preserved in the *Musée Carnavalet*). They sang verses to a slow, sweet melody, pure and classical in style, which Marie Joseph Chénier and Gossec had written for them. A band played marches. For this band curved trumpets of antique form (everything was done in antique style in those days) had been reconstructed, and one of the instruments, built for that occasion, may still be seen in the museum of the *Conservatoire*.

And now we come to an actual funeral event. Mirabeau has died. Never before have the people of Paris felt woe so deep. They crowd the streets through which the procession passes.

There they experience for the first time a musical effect which is to be reproduced often, developed, and amplified later on. A *Marche funèbre* or *Marche lugubre*, still by Gossec, is the occasion. "The notes, separate and detached, broke the hearer's heart, wrung the bowels of compassion," said a contemporary witness. In fact, this work, in which the trombones, rare instruments then, played in gloomy, moaning chords, while the breathless pauses are filled with the vibration of the tam-tam, a sound still more surprising for eighteenth century ears, was the prototype of all those marches which, later on, graced works of the greatest renown. I do not hesitate, even, to call to mind in this connection, Beethoven's immortal *Marcia funèbre per festeggiare il sovvenire di un grande uomo*. One must not, of course, compare its profound and ample beauty with the brief and summary style of Gossec's piece. Let us, however, render due homage to the latter, for his was the inspiration from which the masterpiece was evolved, transfigured by the genius of Beethoven but still founded on this first model. There is another funeral march of later date, not less poignant—that which Berlioz in the guise of Prince Hamlet, wrote for a special occasion from the bottom of his own heart after his father's death. We may be sure that Berlioz knew nothing of our piece, forgotten as it was in Gossec's own day. But the tradition had lived through the intervening years, and if we listen carefully to the anguishing chords and the sobbing rhythms of the "Funeral March for the last scene of Hamlet" we find the same sentiment, receive the same impression; we recognize even the same method of procedure, invented by the classic Gossec, unconsciously repeated by the master of musical romanticism.

Thus the people who lived during the ardent and terrible years of the Revolution could hear anew, whenever the occasion presented itself, musical works composed for them by masters of the art, voicing their aspirations and their varying sentiments, and accompanying all the manifestations of their common life.

V

But these works of musical skill and learning, however well adapted they might be, could not meet every want of the people. The people themselves must sing, and there was only one form that could satisfy this need,—the *chanson*. And so it came that the *chansons* multiplied exceedingly in the course of the French Revolution. Taken together they form a most enlivening and interesting object of study. We may not devote too much time

to them here, but we will dwell for a moment on the most celebrated examples, those which have survived and which are particularly adapted to recalling the picture of the life of their times.

The first is contemporaneous with those manifestations of lyric fervor which we mentioned at the beginning of our consideration of the revolutionary epoch. It is the *Ça ira*. This, briefly, is its history.

The plan to celebrate the fourteenth of July, 1790, the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, by uniting representatives from all the provinces of France at Paris in one great Federation, had aroused great enthusiasm among the people; but its execution met with some resistance on the part of the adherents of the old regime. The festival, the scene of which was laid in the Champs de Mars, at that time outside of Paris, was organized with difficulty. To the obstacles presented by the steady inertia of the authorities the Parisians bid defiance. They resolved to attend to the matter themselves. It was like a picnic for them to go out daily to the banks of the Seine and to prepare the grounds. Filled with ardor and with confidence, the groups of laborers met day after day with the cry of encouragement "*Ça ira!*" (That will go!) At that period there was a *contredanse*, frequently played at the public balls, the tune of which had become popular, as much because of its rhythms as of its title, "The National Carillon," which was quite suited to the taste of the day. By what mysterious force the saying *Ça ira* and the air of the *contredanse* were associated one with the other will never be known. This much is certain,—once the union was established, the success of the chanson was assured. Nothing was needed but to keep on playing the tune (intended for instruments and for the dance, it does not lend itself well to vocal performance) and numerous adaptations of words were forthcoming, rhyming well or ill, and all different. The chanson, in all its variants, sticks to the original beginning with the words thrice repeated: *Ah! ça ira, ça ira, çaira*. The rest does not count and has never become popular.

We note in passing, that according to trustworthy contemporary witnesses, the two little words which have had such a great career, were introduced into the Parisian slang of that day through the imitation of a familiar remark attributed to Benjamin Franklin, who, when asked what he thought of the probability of success for the American Revolution, responded stubbornly: *Ça ira!* If the Paris street gamin, whoever he was, that first

conceived the idea of singing this popular phrase to the tune of the *contredanse*, had taken pains to preserve his name to posterity, we would recognize in him the author of the *chanson*. Remaining in ignorance on this point, we may say then, that the author is Franklin, the involuntary and astonished collaborator of the player of public dance music who composed the air, and who is not anonymous. His name was Bécourt. The fact that the *chanson* versifiers (whether their names be Ladré, Dupuis, Déduit, Huron or Poirier makes little difference), profiting by the spontaneous popularity of the air and the refrain, after July 1790 added words in their own fashion, gives them no title to the authorship of *Ça ira*, to which some of them make pretensions. The *Ça ira* is the work of the people.

It is, in any case, a product essentially Parisian; but it spread immediately over the whole of France. Its hopeful words rendered it worthy, for some years, of expressing the aspirations of the nation. This song, as Michelet remarked, was a *viaticum*, a wayfarer's stay and support, like the proses sung by the pilgrims, who, in true revolutionary fashion, built the cathedrals of Chartres and Strassbourg in the Middle Ages. The Parisian sang it in an impulsive tempo and with violent vivacity. Itinerant bands animated the workmen, who, while they levelled the terrain, sang this leveller's song: *Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira. Celui qui s'élève on l'abaissera* (He who exalts himself shall be abased). Because of its instrumental character it had been promptly arranged for military bands. It was played on the march, for parades, and at civic celebrations. The band of the National Guard of Paris, under its Lieutenant Bandmaster, Gossec, performed it before the Tuileries in the presence of the King, and on the very grounds of the building occupied by the Convention. Thus the *Ça ira* became a sort of official chant of the Revolution in its beginnings. And, as we shall shortly see, it was the abuse of the song which determined in a measure the composition of the true, definitive national air of France. It remained, nevertheless, until the end of the century, one of the "cherished airs of the Republicans."

Ah! ça i - ra, ça i - ra, ça i - ra, Les a - ris - to - crat' à la lan -

ter - ne, Ah! ça i - ra, ça i - ra, ça i - ra, Les a - ris - to - crat' on - les pen - dra.

Fine

S'lon n'les pend pas, on — les — romp' — ra, S'lon n'les pend pas, on — les — brûl' — ra! Ah! ça i —

ra, ça i — ra, ça i — ra. Les a — ris — to — crat' à — la lan — ter — ne! Ah! ça i —

ra, ça i — ra, ça i — ra, Les a — ris — to — crat' on — les pen — dra! Ah! ça i —

Another characteristic *chanson* of the Revolution, the *Carmagnole*, was likewise Parisian. It belongs to another period, the most troubled, possibly the most terrible, of the Revolution; for it came into being on the morrow of the events of the 10th of August, 1792, when, under the menace of a foreign invasion, the royal power was overthrown by a popular uprising, and when Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, having fled from the Tuileries, were imprisoned in the tower of the Temple. The popular hatred finds emphatic utterance in certain stanzas of the *chanson*, which has no literary merit whatever, the author of which remains utterly unknown,—some cart-tail rhymster, doubtless, who did not see fit to disclose his identity.

The melody of the *Carmagnole* is no less anonymous than the words. It certainly antedates the words and has all the earmarks of a true folk-song, the tune of a round dance, like those of which oral tradition has preserved examples, often quite charming, in all the provinces of France. Its refrain: *Dansons la Carmagnole* (Let us dance the Carmagnole), aids us in fixing its origin. Grétry speaks of "the Carmagnole, which came to us from the harbor of Marseilles." It is, accordingly, one of those familiar *chansons* which the men from Marseilles brought to Paris with the *Marseillaise*. Its name, Carmagnole, was applied in the South to the natives of Piedmont, who, every Spring, coming from Carmagnola or elsewhere, crossed the Alps to help the French farmers gather in the harvest, the vintage and the olive crop. These strangers, without doubt, "danced the Carmagnole" with the daughters of Provence, just as in other parts of the country one danced the *Bourbonnaise*, the *Mâconnaise*, the *Auvergnate*. Their refrain, entirely peaceable, was quite naturally carried to Paris by the volunteers from Marseilles who were soon to be involved in the decisive events which followed. Thus it became known in the capital and was associated with new words, which did not always

agree with its amiable, sprightly character, altogether pacific and not at all revolutionary.

Ma - dam' Vé - to a - vait pro - mis, Ma - dam' Vé - to a - vait pro
 mis, De faire é - gor - ger tout Pa - ris, De faire é - gor - ger tout Pa -
 ris, Mais son coup a man - qué, Grâce à nos ca - no - niers. Dan -
 sons la Car - ma - gno - le, Vi - ve le son, vi - ve le son! Dan -
 sons la Car - ma - gno - le, Vi - ve le son Du ca - non!

There is a third chanson, which is worthy of mention here, by reason, firstly, of the great popularity which it enjoyed, and also because of the particular circumstances of its origin. The *Ça ira* and the *Carmagnole* are, as we have said, songs of Paris. But there is another French city which enjoys the privilege of being the cradle of two songs most characteristic of the national spirit, one of them the most illustrious of all. This city is Strassbourg.

It is a singular conjunction. The authors of these two songs written in the Alsatian capital are two men, who, without being personally acquainted with each other, exhibit almost fraternal resemblances. Neither of them was a poet or a musician by profession. They were simply educated and enlightened spirits, men of taste, who loved to write, but who had never, under the old regime, composed verses or music except for their own pleasure. Both had embraced the military career and were, at the time when these events took place, officers in staff corps, assigned to the Army of the Rhine. And finally both came from the same province near Alsace, the Franche-Comté. One of them, Rouget de Lisle, born at Lons-le-Saulnois (Jura) was, in 1792, a captain of engineers, stationed at Strassbourg. The other, whose name is less celebrated, belonged to the medical service in the same city as a surgeon-major. He was born at Champlette (Haute-Saône) and his name was A. S. Boy.

We shall take up presently the work of Rouget de Lisle. Let us first say a few words about that of Boy.

It is a *chanson* in three stanzas, composed according to the usage of the time, to a well-known air: *Veillons au salut de l'empire*. Note in passing that the word "empire" did not mean that the song was dedicated intentionally to the imperial rule. The *chanson* is dated 1791. Boy died in 1795, and we need not remind the reader that the Empire of Napoleon was not proclaimed until 1804. The author, who had gone through his classical course at college, simply used the word "empire" in its Latin acceptance: *imperium*, state, nation. But with how strong an accent of conviction he pronounces in his first stanza the word "Liberty!" The tune to which he adapted his verses, an ariette from an *opéra-comique* by Dalayrac, a really trifling air, is truly transfigured, magnified, illumined by them. Thanks to this conviction, the *chanson Veillons au salut de l'empire* endured with honor throughout all the revolutionary years, and was many a time associated, without being eclipsed, with the immortal *Marseillaise*, the consideration of which we reach at last.

VI

The history of the *Marseillaise* constitutes a chapter of general history which deserves to be universally known. No other song has ever played such a part in the life of humanity. A century and a quarter have rolled by and its light has not paled. It appears to all, even to-day, in greater splendor than ever. The history of the song is as beautiful as the song itself. We must let the work come to life again before our eyes as we relate its history in outline.

The hymn destined to become the national air of France was composed—the date is significant—on the first day of the war between France and the empires beyond the Rhine, the same war, which, uninterrupted except by various periods of truce, broke out again involving almost all the nations of the world, and which has just been terminated. And in the course of this world war of the twentieth century this French song of 1792 has been the call to arms to which all the allied nations have responded.

The author of the *Marseillaise*, as we have said and as all the world knows, was the engineer captain, Rouget de Lisle. Having spent the first two years of the Revolution at Paris, he was sent to Strassbourg in 1791, there to fulfill the obligations of his rank. An amiable man, a good musician, who had already tried his poetic gifts in works which have not remained unknown, he was received

upon his arrival in Alsace in the social circle that gathered in the home of the mayor of Strassbourg, Frederick Dietrich, a man of means, active and full of generous ideas. Soon after his arrival Rouget de Lisle wrote, at the instigation of the Mayor, for a fraternal celebration in 1791 in honor of the adoption of the Constitution, the words of a "Hymn to Liberty." This was set to music by Pleyel and was sung by the people of Strassbourg on the *Place d'Armes* (to-day the *Place Kleber*). Those were still days of beautiful illusions. It seemed that the Revolution was going to end in a grand, general embrace. Alas! Time was not long in giving the lie to these generous hopes. The strife of parties became more and more violent. The foreigner began to interfere, and soon all Europe was on fire.

On the 20th of April, 1792, France declared war on the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria.

On the morning of the 25th of April the news reached Strassbourg.

It was proclaimed immediately by the mayor and the municipality, who organized a procession, entirely military, through the streets and squares. The column, composed of detachments from all the regiments garrisoned in Strassbourg, was led by artillery escorted by the cavalry of the National Guard. Regimental bands preceded the authorities and another detachment of cavalry brought up the rear. A halt was made on each of the principal squares. Each time, the Mayor on horseback and his secretary read the declaration of war in French and in German. The drums beat flourishes and the bands, without interruption, played *Ça ira*, and again *Ça ira* and always *Ça ira*. This air, too well-known, repeated with the insistence of obsession, may have seemed out of place on so solemn an occasion to men of taste, but this was a mere detail which was lost from sight in the host of impressions called forth by the spectacle viewed as a whole.

Everywhere people discussed the events that the morrow would witness. Phrases originating in the clubs became bywords throughout the city, such as the following, taken from a proclamation addressed by the "Society of the Friends of the Constitution" to the people of Strassbourg.

To arms, citizens! The standard of war has been unfurled; the signal has been given. We must fight, conquer, or die.

To arms, citizens! If we persist in being free all the powers of Europe will see their sinister plots crumble. Let them tremble, then, these crowned despots. The light of liberty will shine for all men.

Show yourselves true sons of liberty, hasten to be victorious, scatter the armies of the tyrants! . . .

March on! Let us be free until we draw our latest breath, and let our vows be constant for the welfare of our native land and for the happiness of the human race.

To end this day of patriotic celebration the Mayor gave a grand dinner to all residents of note, both civil and military, in his house on the *Place de Broglie*, the family residence, situated in the part of the town where for many years the Alsatian nobility had established their residences. There the families of Wurmser, Vendenheim, Landsberg, Wangen de Geroldseck, had their ancient halls. To this very day, although the old structures no longer exist, this has remained the most brilliant quarter of Strassbourg. Rouget de Lisle lived near by, on the *rue de la Mésange*, a short, narrow street, bordered by old houses with gables and great square chimneys of a type which may still be seen in certain quarters of the Alsatian capital. The seat of the Barons of Berstett, built in the sixteenth century, rose opposite him.

The names of a number of the guests at this historic repast have been preserved. There were present, beside the host, Generals Victor de Broglie, Achille du Chastellet, and d'Aiguillon; Captains Rouget de Lisle and Caffarelli du Falga; two lieutenants, Masclet of the Adjutant General's Department and Desaix, the future hero of Marengo. Of the residents of the town there were Frederick and Maurice Engelhardt; the host's sons, Albert and Frederick, the older of whom had been since 1791 the commandant of the *Enfants de la Patrie*, the second having enlisted a few days before; and finally two young nieces, and, as it appears, their mother, the mayor's sister-in-law. It was like a farewell dinner, like a knight's vigil over his armor. Several of the guests were preparing to depart for their posts of duty. In four months, after the 10th of August, they were to be scattered at Wissembourg, at Huningue, in the gorges of Porrentruy with the Army of Belgium.

Of what did they speak at first? Who can guess? Of approaching battles, of victories and glories to come. For all were filled with confidence and with enthusiasm; filled with impatience also. The words *Enfants de la Patrie* cropped up often in the course of the conversation. This was the designation of the battalions of young volunteers, notably of that of Strassbourg, commanded by the son of Dietrich. And phrases in the style of the day recurred continually: "*Aux armes, citoyens!* The standard of war has been unfurled, the signal has been given! To arms! Let them

tremble, then, these crowned despots. March on! Let us be free until we draw our latest breath! . . . March on!"

As the dinner continued the company became more animated. The champagne was brought on and the cups went round. The ladies, wearying of politics, demanded another subject. Music was made the topic of discussion. But the idea of war, persisting in spite of all, thrust itself into the musical conversation. The subject of patriotic songs was broached.

All the songs sung by the people came from Paris and were really too mediocre. What, after all, was this *Ça ira*, for instance, which had been dinned all day into one's ears, while Dietrich was making his importunate speeches? A public dance tune, lively and vulgar. Dietrich, well brought up, was indignant at its unmerited success. "Ah what!" said he. "Is there no one who will lift up his voice to let us hear a real national song? Is there, here, in Strassbourg, no poet, no musician who can compose a hymn of war, the war song of the Army of the Rhine, the really martial rhythm of which will better fit the cadence of the march of battalions ready to depart than a *contredanse* tune? What could be done to call forth this much needed product?" The mayor at first thought of instituting a competition. "Yes, that is it," said he. "Tomorrow the public press will announce it, and the municipal council will award a prize to the best composition submitted."

But suddenly another idea came into his head. Turning toward the Captain, and speaking in a tone of benevolent authority, he addressed him: "But you, M. de Lisle, you who speak the language of the gods, who play the harp of Orpheus, do you do this for us. Find a beautiful song for this warrior-people, that arises on all sides at the call of the country in danger, and you will have deserved well of the nation!" Rouget de Lisle concealed himself, played the modest man. But everyone approved highly of Dietrich's idea. The generals seconded him. The young ladies, who had often made music with the youthful officer, were insistent. The whole gathering was in a state of extraordinary emotion. The champagne was passed and repassed, and the glasses were refilled without interruption. At last the party broke up.

The freshness of the night air brought the fervid ideas in Rouget de Lisle's head into equilibrium again. He found himself in an unusually excited frame of mind. After such a day, after such a display of popular enthusiasm and patriotic emotion, he was sorely troubled. The champagne, of which he had drunk

deeply (he confessed it later), did not fail to contribute its share to his uneasiness.

His house on the *rue de la Mésange* was but a few steps off. He entered and mounted to his chamber, the thoughts seething in his brain. His violin lay on the table. He seized it and ran off a few arpeggios. The formulas of the all-pervasive enthusiasm of the day thrust themselves with imperious insistence into his consciousness. "To arms, citizens! The standard of war has been unfurled; the signal has been given. To arms!" His fingers ran over the strings. Mysterious fragments of song vibrated under his bow, "March on! Let us be free until we draw our latest breath!" Little by little the melodic formula crystallized. Verses, in which the words heard in the speeches of the day recur, associated themselves, as if of their own accord, with the music. He took note successively of the essential phrases of the first stanza, "paying attention to the words" he tells us later on, "only so far as was necessary to observe the order which they must follow in the melody." Then he sat down and in one heat wrote the five succeeding stanzas. After which, spent with fatigue and emotion, he threw himself upon his bed and fell into a deep sleep.

The day had long since broken when he awoke at six o'clock that April morning. When he arose, the fresh air of Spring and the joyous freshness of the morning dissipated the last traces of the fog in his brain. As he arose from his bed, his eye caught, upon his desk, the notes written the night before, the remembrance of which already seemed like a dream. He seized the papers and re-read them in fevered astonishment. He could not remain at home. He went out, repairing first to the house of his friend Masclet, an officer on the staff of Victor de Broglie, one of the guests of the preceding evening. "Dietrich's proposal prevented me from sleeping last night," said de Lisle. "I spent the time trying to sketch out his war song, and even to set it to music. Read it, and tell me what you think of it. Then I will sing it for you." Masclet read and listened, not less astonished and undecided. He made a few suggestions to his friend, having him alter two lines, the last of the stanza: *Amour sacré de la Patrie*. In spite of the early hour de Lisle resolved to wait no longer, but to visit Dietrich at once. The latter had just arisen and was found in his garden. Surprised by the prompt response to his proposal, he cast his eye over the paper and said, "Let us go into the salon and I will try the air over on the harpsichord. At first sight I judge that it must be either very good or very poor." The beauty of the melody struck him immediately. He called his wife and

CHANT DE GUERRE

POUR L'ARMÉE DU RHIN,

DÉDIÉ

AU MARCHAL LUKNER.

A S T R A S B O U R G,

De l'Imprimerie de P. J. DANNBACH, Imprimeur de la Municipalité.

bade her write to the guests of the previous evening, inviting them to dine again that same day, and announcing to them that he had an important communication to make. Surely it was an important communication, but the guests mistook his meaning and supposed that Dietrich had received despatches from the army and was going to give them the news. And so, to pique their curiosity, the mayor at first declined to tell them anything. They sat down to dinner and the conversation again turned to the topics of the preceding day. History tells us that with the dessert, the champagne appeared again.

Then Dietrich arose and in his ringing tenor voice, accompanied by his niece, he sang

Allons enfants de la patrie! . . .

The immortal hymn was created. Nothing, henceforth, would arrest its mighty onward march.

Arranged immediately for a military band, the war song of Rouget de Lisle was executed for the first time in public at a final review of the forces departing from Strassbourg, which took place on the Sunday immediately following the composition, April 29, 1792, on the *Place d'Armes*. It has been related that in marching to the new strains of the music the soldiers felt themselves seized with a sudden ardor. "What devil of an air is this?" they asked. "One would say it had a mustache!"

The following month the Strassbourg printer, Dannbach, published it under the title, "War Song for the Army of the Rhine," words and melody, the latter embellished at the close with a singular little ritornell for the violin, in rococo style, which betrays the hand of the amateur. Then, no one knows how, the song was transported southward, and was sung at Marseilles at a banquet of the volunteer battalion, which in July marched through France from that city to Paris. Enthused by the accents in which they found an echo of their own sentiments, these warm-blooded men adopted it as their rallying song. They made it popular, first along the line of march, from the Rhône as far as the Seine, and then in the capital itself. By reason of this propagation Rouget de Lisle's song, composed by the banks of the Rhine, was spread throughout the world, first as the "Hymn of the Men of Marseilles," and finally as "The Marseillaise."

As a matter of fact, the song embraces in itself portions of the genius of all the regions of France. Composed by a sturdy son of the Franche-Comté in that Alsatian land of serious and

profound thinkers on the first day of the greatest war of modern times, almost within sight of the enemy, amid the people into whose hands the safety of the nation was entrusted, and after liberal bumpers of Champagne, that sparkling and stirring wine of France, the national hymn was not yet achieved. It lacked one last element, the sunlight of the South. When this new agent had entered into the composition, the work was perfect; the song, overflowing with life, was ready to march to the deliverance of the world.

There have been attempts, quite unjust, to deny to Rouget de Lisle the glory of having himself uttered this cry of the conscience of France. He has been accused of not being the author of the *Marseillaise*. We cannot stop here to engage in a discussion, which after all, no longer has an object. For no one, in fact, to-day maintains this proposition, whose promoters, whoever they were, have never offered the guarantees necessary to a quiet, impartial debate. They were always the adversaries of the ideas symbolized by this song, either in France, where before becoming a national hymn, the *Marseillaise* long remained the symbol of a party, and the opposition would have been glad to tarnish the purity of its origin by having it appear that it was borrowed from a religious chant—or in Germany where one had every reason in the world for not wanting such a beautiful song to be the work of a Frenchman. But none of these pretensions has been confirmed by facts, while the validity of the attribution to Rouget de Lisle is attested by historic witnesses of most positive worth. It is quite true that the theme of the *Marseillaise* has been found in numerous other musical compositions, but they are all of later date than our song, and their use of the melody, far from being unfavorable to the cause of the true author, only confirms the prestige which the illustrious hymn enjoyed from the time of its first appearance. Even masters like Schumann and Richard Wagner did not disdain to introduce the French theme in certain of their compositions. But it is not the use of the *Marseillaise* in the "Two Grenadiers" or the "Carnival of Venice" which proves that Rouget de Lisle was not the author; and the practice sanctioned by such masters was only the result of a tradition inaugurated by more obscure musicians. All of them, in view of a popularity so immediate and so universal, believed themselves authorized to borrow it, which was, in fact, a mark of homage. But, although it appeared to belong to the whole world, the song was the product of a single head, and that head was Rouget de Lisle's.

VII

Let us go, as rapidly as possible, over the other songs associated with public life during the first Republic. Their connection with the general course of history is so intimate that at certain times we shall find that they have a bearing on our musical institutions themselves. Thus we shall witness the celebration of a revolutionary festival which in itself had no further consequences, but which coincided with the creation of a work as durable as any, namely the *Conservatoire*, and the songs prepared for this celebration were, if not the cause, at any rate the occasion of the founding of this institution.

The *Conservatoire* is the direct issue of the national festivals. On the morrow of the fall of the Bastille, the regiment of the *Gardes Françaises* having been dissolved, the band of this body was reorganized under the administration of a civil functionary, Sarrette, and under the musical direction of Gossec. It became the band of the National Guard. In this capacity it took part in all the celebrations. Not sufficiently numerous for the vast productions which it was the ambition of the epoch to give, it added a group of pupils to its effectives and thus became the music school of the National Guard. In 1793, after four years of practise, it had stood the test sufficiently well to justify its pretensions to become a state institution.

On the 17th of Brumaire of the year II, accordingly, the band under the leadership of its chief appeared before the Convention asking to be taken under its patronage. By a marvellous coincidence, it happened that on that very day the Convention was deliberating upon the celebration of a festival which was to take place two days later, and which is known in history as the Festival of Reason. The musicians of the National Guard, wishing to give the Convention a sample of their abilities, played, in open session, a "Hymn to Liberty," which they had intended for an approaching celebration. They were applauded and the piece was requested for the festival at that moment in preparation. Then, without delaying, the Convention decreed that the Music School of the National Guard should become the "National Institute of Music," a name which, two years later, was changed to *Conservatoire*.

Thus it was that the first public manifestation of the life of this great institution, was consecrated to a participation, in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, in the justly decried Festival of

Reason. Save for the incident which has just been related, this festival was of no further significance among the celebrations which are most important from our present point of view. Even the music dedicated to its observance has been lost.

But soon there came a day which was more favorable to the collaboration of musical art. It was the day of the Festival of the Supreme Being. Its story constitutes a chapter of a veritable musical novel.

But first we must relate an incident which occurred at the *Conservatoire* shortly after the Festival of Reason. Sarrette, thinking that the time was ripe for manifesting advanced opinions, had gone at the head of a detachment of the National Guard to lock up, and forbid worship in, the church of Gagny, a village in the environs of Paris, where Gossec had a country house. But he had no sense for the opportuneness of his act, which, to say the least, we cannot qualify as anything else than imprudent. At the very moment when he committed it, the reaction against the anti-religious excesses began to make itself felt. On his return to Paris he was arrested.

In the meantime Robespierre proposed and brought about the vote for the Festival of the Supreme Being. This was to be entirely religious in character and at the same time popular and national. Music held a very important place in his program. But what to do when the Director of the *Conservatoire* was behind the bars? The professors, Cherubini, Lesueur, Catel, and the others, demanded his liberation and obtained it, not without effort. Later on, at a time when it was not wise to awaken recollections of this kind, this Gascon, Sarrette, set afloat the rumor that he had been arrested because one of the pupils of the horn class had played on his horn the royalist air, "O Richard, O my King!" The truth was very different. It was for an outburst of excessive revolutionary spirit, and not for an incident which might be called reactionary, that Sarrette had been jailed.

Be that as it may, the celebration of which he had to organize the musical part, set on foot the entire musical resources of Paris. It even revealed such resources where they had never been suspected. Robespierre had wished that the entire people should unite its voice with the professional musicians. The professors of the *Conservatoire* answered this audacious invitation. Here is the letter, signed with the greatest names that the French school could muster at the end of the eighteenth century, which, with one accord, they wrote to the Convention:

Representatives of the people:

The National Convention, when it decreed festivals worthy of the majesty of the people, called upon all the arts to contribute to their magnificence.

Music has so active a share in these celebrations through the character which it impresses upon them, that the Institute cannot fail to be deeply penetrated by the sublime functions which it is to fulfill.

It considers not only the riches which the art of music should contribute to these celebrations, and the pupil musicians which it ought to produce for the Republic under all circumstances. There is another function, more honorable still, to which it is pledged: that of transmitting to the people the songs and hymns which have been chosen for consecration to the public festivals.

The void left by the suppression of the ritual of fanaticism ought to be filled by the songs of liberty, and the people ought to enhance by their voices the solemnity of the festivals dedicated to the virtues honored by the Republic.

Simple airs will be composed. The members of the Institute will repair to the primary schools in the several wards. The people, and its most interesting part—the hope of the Nation—will then learn the hymns which are to be performed at the celebrations.

Then the free French people will prove to enslaved Germany and Italy that it too possesses the genius of this art, but that it consecrates it to singing liberty only. Let the despots tremble. With a national song Frenchmen have more than once redoubled their valor in battle; and they were songs of the people which animated the courage that has shattered the tyrant's throne.

The accents of liberty always precede its standards.

In the name of the National Institute of Music:

LESUEUR, composer; MÉHUL, composer; GOSSEC, composer; DALAYRAC, composer; SARRETTE; CATEL, composer; P. RODE, violin; DEVIENNE, composer; HERMANN, clavecinist; LEFÈVRE, clarinet; OZI, bassoon; VENY, secretary; BUCH, horn; SALLANTIN, oboe; L. JADIN, composer; MATHIEU, serpent; HUGOT, flute; LEVASSEUR, violoncello; F. DUVERNOY, horn; BLASIUS, violin.

Gossec and Chenier had composed the "Hymn to the Supreme Being," a vast choral and orchestral fresco, the execution of which they had assigned to the chorus of professional artists, already numerous. But five days before the celebration, Robespierre, exhibiting that imperious will which he had displayed from the beginning, and not wishing, for reasons of policy, to give too important a place to a poet who was not of his party, M. J. Chenier, required that the hymn be rewritten in simpler form and to other words, and that it be sung by citizens, men and women of Paris requisitioned in their respective wards. And the *tour de force* was carried out. An "occasional" poet (never was the term more applicable) appeared very opportunely, and offered a new

poem. For this poem Gossec improvised a unison song, a very simple melody which could be easily memorized by the crowd. In addition, the celebration was to be terminated by a performance of the *Marseillaise*, likewise sung by all the people, but to other words than those of Rouget de Lisle, words written to suit the circumstances. It was necessary to bring into accord the thousands, the tens of thousands of Parisian voices. How was this to be done? Very simply. The people were made to rehearse!

By order of the authorities the forty-eight wards of the city assembled, on the eve of this festival, "everything which had a voice, a heart, and blood in its veins," as Berlioz said later. And the forty-eight musicians, the most famous—Méhul, Cherubini, Lesueur, Kreutzer, Dalayrac, and all the rest—armed with violins or accompanied by singers, applied themselves to the task of teaching the people, who were surely unable to read music, the new *Hymn to the Supreme Being* and the national song which was to be the fitting conclusion of the festival.

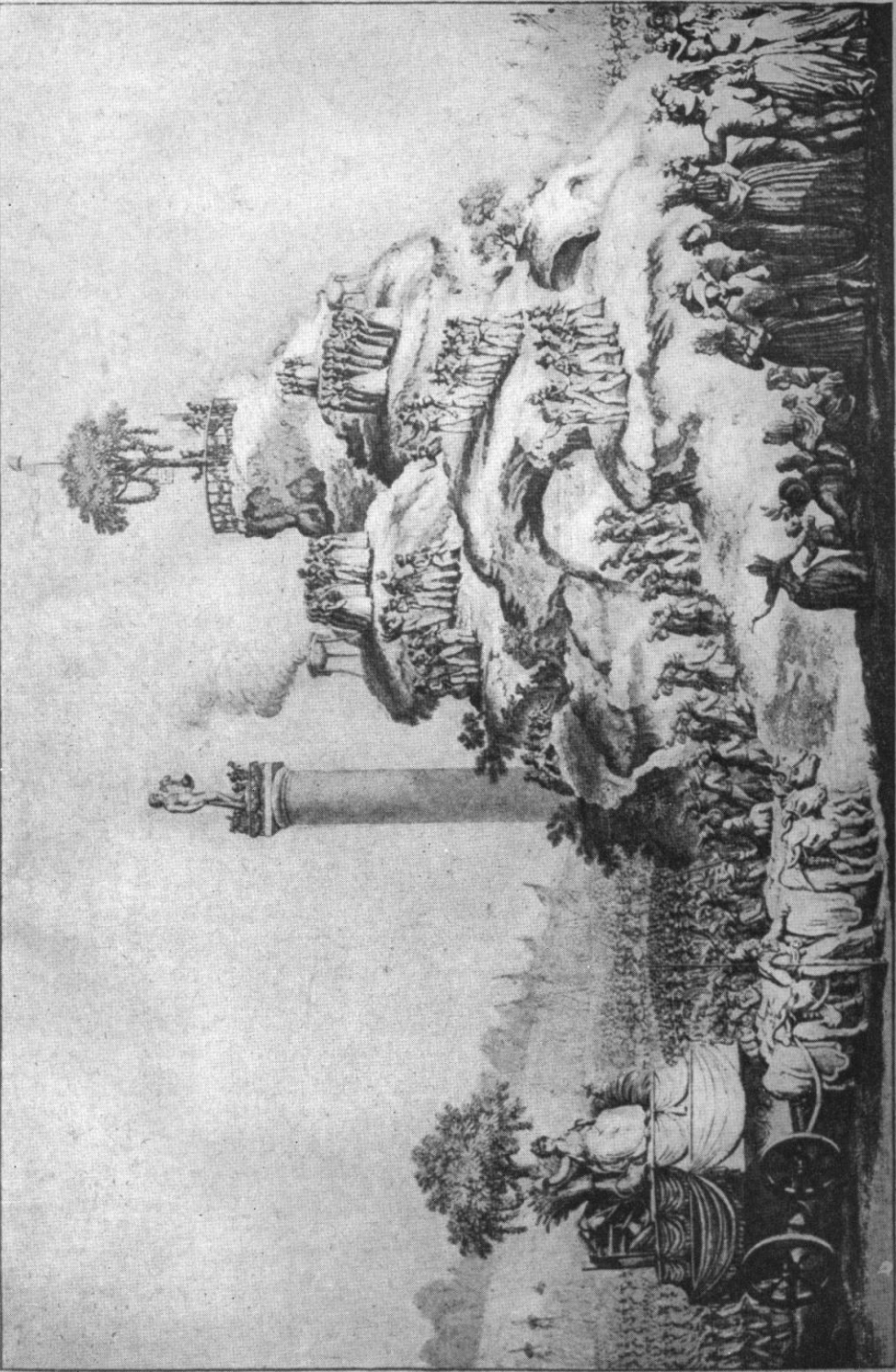
And on the next day at the celebration in the Tuileries, Gossec's hymn rolled forth, borne by the three thousand voices of the ward delegates, and a little later on the *Champs de Mars* the national air was thundered out by one hundred and fifty thousand voices in unison! Surely, we have never heard such a concert, and we may confidently marvel at the effect which it must have produced.

Grétry called the music of the Revolution "cannon shot music." The expression may be taken literally. Not only did this immense populace sing with one voice, held together by the baton of an orchestra leader, but also, to the thunder of the last refrain, the drums began to beat and to roll and salvos of artillery roared a mighty accompaniment to the harmonious tumult.

Gossec won lasting renown by conducting this immense musical action. For many years his greatest title to glory was his authorship of the *Hymn to the Supreme Being*.

In addition to this the Spring of the year 1794 was fruitful in beautiful products of national lyric art, for it is hardly a month after the celebration we have just described that we find a new song, the most celebrated and the finest after the *Marseillaise*, that the epoch produced, the *Chant du Départ*.

The *Chant du Départ*, the words by Marie Joseph Chénier, the music by Méhul, has been justly called "the mobilization song of the year II." The poem, in verses of great beauty, lets the various representatives of the nation speak by turns, the mothers say farewell to their sons as they depart for the front, the girls



FÊTE DE L'ÊTRE SUPRÊME.

pledge themselves to wed none but faithful servants of their country, the children think of the day when they may have to close the eyelids of their beloved dead, the soldiers vow to return with victorious arms, and the entire people proclaims its sovereign will not to lay down its arms until the enemy is destroyed.

It has been related (and this is all that is known about the origin of the song) that the words were communicated to Méhul one evening when all the professors of the National Institute of Music were gathered together in the salon of their Director, and that carried away by a sudden inspiration when he heard them, the young master sketched the main outline of the piece as he leaned on the marble of the chimney piece,—a tradition which has nothing improbable about it, for the song has all the more excellent marks of an improvisation, spontaneity, freshness, immediate utterance. It is a trumpet call, a war cry, which found an instantaneous echo in the hearts of the French people. Performed for the first time on the fourth anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, on the 14th of July, 1794, it spread immediately among the people fighting for life and for liberty. And when, one hundred and twenty years later, the battle recommenced, the *Chant du Départ* was there, more beautiful, more brilliant, more vibrant than it appeared even in the years immediately after its glorious birth.

The celebrations of national festivals continued up to the time of the Consulate and the first Empire, and music did not cease to fill a large place in them. After Gossec, who was growing old, and who gradually withdrew from active life, the younger masters whose names we know took turns at enriching the repertoire. Méhul followed the *Chant du Départ* with other fine songs in a popular form, awaiting his opportunity to produce one last composition of the largest proportions which we shall shortly cite as the crowning work of this lyric ensemble. Napoleon's victory in Italy inspired Lesueur to the production of the *Triumphal Song of the Republic*, proud in its bearing, and brilliant as befitted its subject. Cherubini, as a prelude to his later religious compositions, wrote his *Hymn to the Pantheon* in the loftiest style, as well as his imposing *Funeral Hymn to the Memory of General Hoche*, a veritable masterpiece. Catel wrote *Hymns to Victory*. Berton, Martini, and also Lesueur, Méhul and Cherubini wrote divers hymns to labor as well as songs for the celebration of various events in human life (hymns to Agriculture, to Youth, to Old Age, to Hymen, etc.), and Grétry, well advanced in years, did not hesitate to summon his fellow citizens to dance the *Round*

for the *Planting of the Liberty Tree*. The last manifestations of this national, artistic activity were those which gave birth to the vastest works. In the year 1800, two events were celebrated at the *Invalides*, and Méhul and Lesueur created for these occasions two great musical compositions, one for three choirs and three orchestras, the other for four, which are veritable monuments of sonorous architecture. Their value lies not only in their grandeur of form, but even more in the sincere and profound sentiment which inspired them. Thus the *National Song of July 14, 1800*, by Méhul has, toward the close of its development, a simple little chorus for women's voices, accompanied by harps and a horn, which like the cupola choruses of Parsifal, resounding from the heights of the dome which to-day covers the remains of Napoleon, floated over the heads of the listening host in smooth, gentle, mysterious harmonies to the words

Les fils sont plus grands que les pères
Et nos cœurs n'en sont point jaloux.

The sons are greater than the fathers,
Yet our hearts feel no jealous pang.

For the significance of its words as well as for the impressive beauty of its music, this song of the pacified Revolution would deserve a revival to-day to express the sentiment of affectionate gratitude which we all feel for those who, worthy continuators of those heroic times, have fought and died for a cause eternally great.

Thus, in these ten active and tormented years of French history, music is found in daily association with the events of national life. There, beyond a doubt, the art found a source of fertile inspiration. Later on this union became less close. The doctrine of "art for art's sake" prevailed. We cannot be too sure that this difference of orientation did not have a detrimental effect on the sincerity of the works produced.

In any case, the nineteenth century has known no efflorescence of works of national art analogous to that of the last ten years of the eighteenth. Not that the example set by that period has been completely lost from sight, but that only by way of exception, at greater intervals, do we find works of art issuing resolutely from the collective inspiration.

The period of the Empire and that of the Restoration have, in reality, produced nothing in this genre.

The Revolution of 1830, reviving memories which had not been completely stifled, induced a few poets and musicians to take up again and to amplify the noble traditions which these

memories recalled. Thus in 1830, for the anniversary of the July days, Victor Hugo wrote his beautiful verses:

Ceux qui pieusement sont morts pour la patrie

.
Gloire à notre France éternelle!

Gloire à ceux qui sont morts pour elle!

Those who in pious love have for their country died

.
Glory to France, forever cherished!

Glory to those who for her perished!

Herold was the first to write music for this touching poem which stands as a definitive expression of a permanent sentiment; than which none better could be found after 1914 to sing our renewed sorrow. In fact, the verses of Victor Hugo have been taken up again in our days by a great many musicians who have nowhere found a better text for their harmonies, expressing the present woe of the nation weeping for its heroes.

Nor has the greatest French musician of the same epoch, Hector Berlioz, escaped their noble influence. It was to celebrate the same memorable events that he composed and led the performance, at the dedication of the July Column, of his *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*, the worthy sister of his Requiem. This latter work itself was conceived in connection with the commemoration of another national event, in honor of the soldiers fallen in battle in the African wars. These are most beautiful models of what has been justly called monumental music.

Great national upheavals always give birth spontaneously to the loftiest inspirations.

In 1870, during the siege of Paris, César Franck, who, although of Belgian birth, did not seek to avoid the dangers incurred by his compatriots by adoption, one hopeful day read a poem which proclaimed the approaching deliverance of the heroic city, and in the ardor of his enthusiasm set it to music. Alas! the hope was not to be realized. Paris was not rescued at that time, and the work, after its purpose was so cruelly frustrated, could not be offered to the public. It was discovered, unpublished, among Franck's papers more than twenty-five years after his death. It was performed in 1915 amid scenes of anguish analogous to those which had inspired its creation. The ode, *Paris*, appeared to equal in beauty *The Beatitudes*, the composition of which Franck had interrupted to compose the ode. Could we mention a more beautiful example of music suggested by the national sentiment?

Still subject to these same influences, Gounod conceived his *Gallia*, a work in his noblest style; and M. Saint-Saëns wrote his proud *Marche Héroïque*, dedicated to the memory of a great artist who had died for France, Henri Regnault; and a little later Bizet sketched the broad lines of his overture, *Patrie*.

We could multiply these instances, even though they are not as numerous as we might wish. We cannot, in this connection, refrain from expressing regret that this revival has been so little encouraged in our days by the powers that be. It is only too true that the art of national music, to which the men of the Revolution gave such efficacious and powerful support, has not found the same favor and encouragement in the twentieth century. However, the time is not yet come to take account of the works to which the last war has inspired our poets and musicians. Let us end this exposition with the simple statement that the need for music of an epoch which has been thrilled with emotions so vehement and intense has scarcely found satisfaction except in the works of the past, notably in the *Marseillaise*, which has gained a renewed prestige among all nations of the world, and also in certain *chansons* of a lively sentiment at times, but in an inferior style, where inspiration does not rise to the high level of the feelings which would have sought utterance in other tones. To be sure, we have masters who have attempted to serve with a higher type of art the cause for which each wished to fight with his own weapons. Ideas of this kind have been written down upon numerous pages worthy of honor; but (perhaps for want of a general impulse) it does not appear that so formidable an upheaval has called forth the intimate and profound musical echo which one might have expected as its result.

VIII

It would be wrong, however, for musicians to think that they should disdain the sources of inspiration offered them by events of this nature. We have in the foregoing study furnished the proof that at times they were justified in the highest degree in drawing upon these sources. And, to end with the most significant and at the same time the most illustrious historical example, we appeal to the greatest master, to him who, though not living in France, but not without often directing his thoughts to France, has raised the art of music to its highest power.

Beethoven was a contemporary of the French Revolution. While still a young man, when his genius was making its first

flights, he wrote a symphony of more ample dimensions than any written up to that time. But he did not limit himself to a mere aggrandizement of musical forms. A lofty and sublime idea was the principal reason for this upward movement to which, in the evolution of the art, the Heroic Symphony corresponds, and the idea was inspired by great deeds, the accomplishment of which uplifted all mankind.

In the eyes of Beethoven, General Bonaparte represented the idea of the French Revolution. With him in mind he conceived his work. And if (history attests the fact) he withdrew his homage when he substituted the word *eroica* for the name of the man originally inscribed on the score, it was because he judged that he who made himself emperor was no longer worthy of personifying his pure ideal of liberty. The fact remains that the symphony, austere and vibrant with its funeral march, unfolding a most suggestive picture of the life of the people in the days of trouble, with its noise of crowds and of battle, and its final movement, which, expanding, seems to unite all mankind in a hymn of love, a dream of universal brotherhood, was directly inspired by these events in France, which at the same time and in that same land of Beethoven caused the hearts of others to swell with noble emotions and pure ideals: Kant, Schiller, Klopstock, and many others with them.

Later, when his genius, completely liberated, had reached its most sublime heights, he wished to utter the supreme affirmation of his ideals in writing a last symphony—the ninth—and here again he finds himself borne to the same higher regions which he had explored twenty years before. The choral symphony, with the Ode to Joy, the joy of brotherhood, is like a magnified *Eroica*, with its development on the same plan as the *Eroica*. In the later symphony the musical thought is illumined by the words chosen by Beethoven:

Freude, schöner Götterfunken

.

Deine Zauber binden wieder

Was die Mode streng geteilt.

Alle Menschen werden Brüder

Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

Joy, thou godsent spark of beauty

.

Once again thy magic bindeth

What apart stern custom holds.

Man in men his brothers findeth

Where thy gentle wing unfolds.

But still these ideas (as expressed in Schiller's ode) were the ideas of France! See how Jean Jacques Rousseau had expressed them long before Schiller:

It is fitting that men should come together often and establish between them the sweet bonds of pleasure *and of joy*. . . . The people love to communicate to each other their joys and their pleasures. All classes of society become as one; everything is common to all.

And here we have something more significant still. Read these words:

Bring together by the charm of friendship and with the bonds of virtue the men whom one has sought to keep divided.

It is almost literally the expression of Schiller: *Deine Zauber binden wieder, Was die Mode streng geteilt*.

Bring men together, you will make them better. . . . For men, gathered together, will seek to please each other, and men do not see each other without pleasure.

Whose words are these? Robespierre's, when he proposed to the Convention the celebration of the Feast of the Supreme Being. There you see where Beethoven went to find the idea which he has interpreted in his splendid symphony and which set in vibration his most mysterious chords. What more glorious justification could we have offered in support of our proposition: that the sentiments evoked by national events and the universal consciousness are those most worthy of inspiring works of art? And the art of music, far from seeing its interest in remaining a stranger to history, to its deeds and to the feelings which have been its motive forces, has owed them, as we have shown, frequent opportunities to erect in their honor, monuments of high import, and, at times, occasions for creating its most admirable and its most definitive masterpieces.

(Translated by O. T. Kindler)